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FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2519
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS FREETOWN 000095

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, DS/ICI/CI, DS/IP/AF AND DS/IP/ITA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SL](#)

SUBJECT: FREETOWN EAC MEETING MARCH 16, 2009

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Ambassador convened the Emergency Action Committee (EAC) on March 16, 2009 to review the security situation in Freetown following politically-motivated riots on March 13 and March 16. The EAC was chaired by the AMB, and attended by DCM, RSO, POL, MGMT, DAO, CONS, APAO, CLO, and Legatt. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On March 13, the Sierra Leonean People's Party headquarters (SLPP) was stoned by a mob of supporters from the governing all Peoples Congress (APC), and several vehicles were burned on the compound. Following a relatively calm weekend, violence resurged on March 16, with APC party members allegedly resuming their attack on SLPP headquarters and looting the premises. Reports of gunfire were received by multiple contacts. The SLP has cordoned off sections of the downtown area, and all businesses and government buildings in the vicinity are closed. Threats of violence are rampant, with journalists and SLPP officials allegedly receiving death threats from APC supporters, and party members from both sides in other parts of the country stating their intentions to take retaliatory action. The Ambassador met with the APC Foreign Minister to express the need for cessation of party violence and later met with the SLPP President to reinforce this message. The UN Executive Representative of the Secretary General concurred with the Ambassadors recommendation that the diplomatic corps meet the morning of March 17th with both parties' leadership.

¶3. (U) The EAC reviewed post's security posture and determined:

¶A. Lungi Airport is still operating on a regular schedule.

¶B. Embassy is still open to all staff.

¶C. Local Guard Force, residential and facilities are fully staffed.

¶D. Key traffic routes within the city are still open, although various streets are closed off to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic near the prison, SLPP headquarters, and surrounding areas.

¶4. (U) The EAC decided to:

¶A. Maintain increased security patrols around residences, Mission facilities, and vehicle routes used by Mission staff.

¶B. Issue a warden message advising American citizens to: avoid political gatherings and the downtown area until the situation has been ameliorated; exercise general caution; and respect police blockades and instructions.

¶5. (U) Post will continue to monitor the situation. At this time no direct threat to American or Foreign citizens has occurred.

PERRY